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BY

FREDERICK J.BACON

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## Preface

This book is written for the express purpose of making the art of banjo playing much easier than it has been heretofore, and the author believes that careful study and persistent practice of the scales and exercises contained herein, will enable both teacher and student to perform the most difficult selections with comparative ease and smoothness.

The length of the banjo fingerboard is such, that in order to execute rapid runs etc, and perform them, as they should be performed, it is absolutely neccessary to use the fingers of both hands correctly and play such passages as require rapid fingering, in positions. The fingers of the right hand should be always used in picking the strings, and never use a pick or plectum or any similar device.

This being as crude a way of playing the banjo as the old style thimble playing twenty five years or more ago. The student should at all times try and produce a clear musical tone. An explanation of the "C" Notation or English style of writing banjo music is given on pages 56-57

In taking up the study of music it is very essential that you should know the meaning of the different characters used. The Staff upon which the notes are written, has five lines and four spaces.

The name of a note is determined by the line or space upon which it is written. Each line and space on the staff has a name. The notes are named after the first seven letters of the alphabet viz: A, B, C, D, E, F, G.  $\frac{R}{B}$   $\frac{R}{B}$  Beginning at the bottom in the above illustration the first line is called E. The second line G. Third line B. Fourth line D and fifth line F.

The first or lowest space is called F second space A third space C fourth space E. spells FACE. The student will notice in the above illustration, that the letter E and letter F occur in two different places on the staff. There are eight notes used in an octave. The first and eighth are called the same by letter, as the tones are the same except one gives a sound an octave higher. As only the first seven letters of the alphabet are used, it is neccessary therefore to use one of the letters twice in a scale.

This character is called "G" or treble clef and is always placed at the beginning of the staff. There are several clefs, but this is the only one used in Banjo music.

The two 4's written next to the clef sign in the illustration represents the time in which the music is to be played.  $(\frac{4}{4} \text{ time})$  which means that there are 4 quarter notes to each measure or their equivalent.

Music is divided into portions of equal time, by lines drawn across the staff\_ called bars. The space between two bars is called a measure.

In the above illustration the first measure contains four quarter notes In the second measure, there are two half notes, which make up the time value, as they are oquivalent to four quarter notes. The equivalent of four quarter notes is easily found in the third measure.

Sometimes the staff is not sufficient to represent all the different degrees of sound,

so we use characters called ledger or added lines, below and above the staff.

Each line or space above or below the staff is a repitition of a line or space in the staff but in a higher or lower pitch.



lowest sound playable on the banjo.



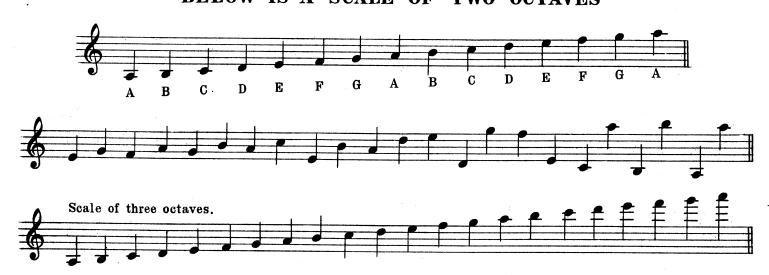
Highest sound playable on the banjo.



For the sake of uniformity the notes are written with both the stems turned down or up.

There are a number of different kinds of time used in music. There is the  $\frac{4}{4}$  or common time,  $\frac{2}{4}$   $\frac{3}{4}$   $\frac{3}{8}$   $\frac{6}{8}$  and various others. In all cases the upper figure denotes the number of beats to each measure and the lower figure indicates the kind of a note which receives one beat or count. For example in  $\frac{6}{8}$  time, you would count six beats to the measure giving one count to each *eighth* note or its equivalent. The  $\frac{4}{4}$  or common time is sometimes written with a C.

### BELOW IS A SCALE OF TWO OCTAVES



Study carefully the above notes, and memorize them, so that you can always call each note by name wherever you see it.

There are five strings on the banjo. The short string is called the fifth or thumb string (called thumb string because the thumb of the right hand is the only finger used to pick this string)

The name of this string is "E" and is written in the fourth space. Sometimes it is written with a double stem thus:

or with a cipher to the right of it.

As before stated the lowest note found on the banjo is "A" and is called the fourth string

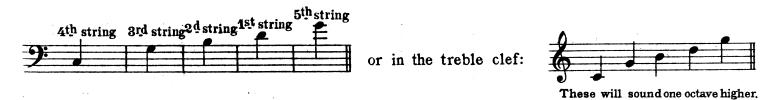
The third string on the banjo is called "E" one octave lower than the fifth string, open

The second string on the banjo is "G#" and is written on the 2d line of the staff

The first string open is called "B" and is written on the third line of the staff

#### Tuning the Banjo

Tune Banjo to the following notes on the piano.

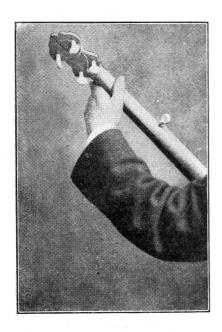


Another method of tuning the banjo is to tune the bass or fourth string to "C" and then tune the others by aid of the frets. Place your second left hand finger on the seventh fret, fourth string, and tune the third string open, so it will sound the same. Then place second finger of the left hand on the third string on the fourth fret and tune second string so it will give the same sound. Then place second finger of left hand on the third fret, on the second string, and tune first string to sound the same. Last, put your second finger of left hand on fifth fret, on first string, and tune fifth string to give the same sound. When two strings are in tune, if one is struck the other will vibrate.



The above are all open strings. Always pick the first string with the second finger; second string with the first finger and third fourth and fifth with the thumb when not marked oth erwise.







# Position of the Body and hands when playing the banjo.

The Body should be nearly erect, but leaning slightly forward. Rest the Rim of the banjo on the right thigh, pressing the upper part
lightly to the body with the forearm. Support the neck in the hollow of the left hand,
between the finger and thumb as shown in
illustration No. 2. then curve the fingers so
that the tips can be used in pressing the
strings to the fingerboard.

Rest the little finger of the right hand about an inch and a half or two inches from the bridge and curve the other fingers so that the thumb will strike the strings about an inch farther from the bridge than the first finger. See Illustration No 3.

Never allow the thumb to pick the strings back of the first and second fingers. Never bend the thumb at first joint when striking the strings. It should be kept straight at all times.

The strings should be picked with the tips of the fingers, and never get under the strings far enough to lift them up, giving a disagreeable snapping tone. Never pick the strings with the nails.

As explained on page three the fourth or bass string is tuned to C on the piano Consequently the note "A" (4th stg. open) sounds exactly as the note C on the piano. Therefore when you play on the banjo in A major, the piano must be played in C major, which is the natural key and has no sharps or flats. This is the reason why "A" major is called the natural key of the Banjo, corresponding with the natural key on the piano. Each fret on the banjo represents an interval of one half tone. An interval is the distance between any two notes or tones.

A sharp (#) placed before a note raises it a half step

A flat (b) placed before a note lowers it a half step

A natural (4) restores a note previously made sharp or flat to its normal pitch.

A double sharp (x) raises a note one whole tone two frets.

A double flat (bb) lowers a note one whole tone two frets.

Notes played double sharp or double flat, are restored to their former position of single sharp thus. (##) and single flat thus: (#b)

When naturals, sharps or flats are written other than in the signature, they are called, "Accidentals."

The natural sign (\$\bar{\pi}\$) effects both the signature and accidental sharps and flats.

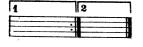
The accidental sharp or flat or natural is not considered beyond the measure in which it is written unless tied thus:

Two notes connected by a slur as in illustration are called tied, notes. Only the first note is played when two notes are connected thus. The first note is picked with a finger of the right hand and the second note is played by pulling or snapping the string with the finger of the left hand employed in making the first note.

If the second note is highest sound the first as before, and let the finger of the left hand descend with force upon the second note, which makes the sound from the mere impulse of the finger

Double bars mark the end of a strain. thus. Two dots or more signify repitition.

If a melody is to be repeated with a change in the last measure or measures, a bracket is written above the notes to be played the first ending. The notes under the first bracket are skipped the second time, and the notes under the second bracket are played instead. thus:

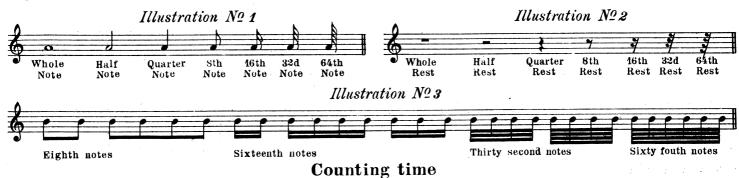


Occasionally a third ending is used.

The clef, the figures indicating the time value of each measure, and the sharps and other characters which may be written at the beginning of a staff are collectively called the signature.

#### Rests

Very frequently it is necessary to stop playing for one or more measures or for a fraction of a measure. Characters called rests have a time value similiar to notes and when a silence is wanted, rests equivalent in time value take the place of notes, so as to give the measure its full time value. The table below gives the notes in general use with rests underneath of equal time value. Notice that the 8th, 16th, 32d and 64th notes have small hooks on the stems. When two or more 8th notes (or those of a smaller fraction) appear consecutively in one measure, the hooks are dispensed with and bars connecting the stems, as shown in illustration No.3, take the place of hooks.



In order to keep correct time it is necessary that you practice counting aloud. As soon as an exercise or melody is thoroughly learned, the counting may be discontinued. When the signature indicates that four quarter notes or their equivalent are to be found in each measure. It is necessary to count "one" "two" "three" "four" to each measure. In counting the time in Illustration No.4 there must not be a longer pause between count "four" and count "one" (of the following measure) than there is between, count "one" and "two." Count evenly about as fast as the ticking of a large clock. If the music is too difficult to count so fast allow two or three ticks of the clock for each count. It is better to play slowly and have the time correct and without pauses. In the fourth measure of the following exercise the word "and" is spoken when written. The "and" is used to make easier the counting of time when playing notes smaller than quarters. The counting of "one-and" in the fourth measure of Illustration, No.4 must not take up more time than counting "one" in the third measure in same illustration.



A dot written after a note thus: increases the time value of the note one half. A half note without the dot has two counts and is equal to two quarter notes, but with the dot as shown in this illustration the note has three counts and is equal to three quarter notes.

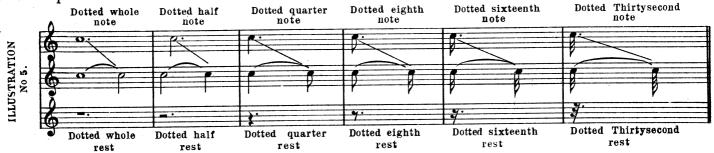
The first staff in the following illustration shows the dotted notes commonly used.

The second staff shows the time value of the dotted notes written out.

The third staff shows rests equal in time value to the first and second staffs.

By comparing the dots in the first staff with the second note in each measure of the second staff, you will notice that the dot is practically an obbreviation and saves writing the tie — and the second note.

The time value of the dots in the first staff are indicated by the diagonal lines connecting the notes equivalent in value to the dots.



### Common Characters used in Music

D.C. is the abbreviation for "Da Capo" and means from the beginning.

D. C. al fine, return to the beginning and stop at the word Fine.

Rit is the abbreviation for ritardando and means to play a little slower.

Tempo di valse means that the composition should be played in waltz time.

This sign  $\wedge$  when placed over a note or rest, means, that the performer is to pause as long as he thinks proper.

This sign  $\cap$  also means when placed at the end of a double bar, that the piece ends there.

The word *fine* also means the end.

The sign / means to repeat the preceding measure.

Cres. or \_\_\_\_ is the abbreviation for Crescendo and means to gradually increase the tone.

Decres. or \_\_\_\_\_ is the abbreviation for Decrescendo and means to gradually decrease the tone.

Dim. is the abbreviation for Diminuendo and means to diminish the tone.

Dim al fine means to diminish the tone to the end.

Rall is the abbreviation for rallentando and means slower.

Rall dim means slower and softer. Andante means to play slow. Andantino means to play somewhat slower than Andante. Dolce means to play soft and sweet.

### Sings for Right hand fingering

This character (x) written above or below a note, means that the thumb should pick this note. One dot (•) placed above or below a note, means to pick the note with the first finger of right hand, Two dots (••) indicate that the note is to be picked with the second right hand finger. Three dots (•••) indicate that the note is to be picked with the third right hand finger.

These characters X - X mean to slide the thumb from one string to another, when playing the notes under which this sign is placed. This sign (•--•) indicates that the first finger is to slide or be drawn

### Left hand fingering

Figures to the right of notes, indicate left hand fingers. A cipher (0) means that the string is to be played open.

The natural scale of the banjo is "A" major, which has three sharps in the signature thus:

This means that all "F's" "C's" and "G's" are played sharp, one fret or one half tone higher than their natural tone. Before taking up the scale of "A" major the author believes that the student should first learn where the natural tones are on the banjo, by first learning the scale of "C" after which, we will then take up the key of "G" The signature being one, sharp only

All notes are played natural in this key the same as the key of "C" except all "F's" which are to be played sharp. In the key of "D" there are two notes sharped "F" and

"A" which follows.

### Scale of C Major



### Scale of "A" Major

(Natural Key of the Banjo)
Play F, C & G sharp







The following illustration will teach you where the same note can be played on the different strings. The student will observe that notes played on the first string can be found three frets higher on the second string. Notes found on the second string can be played on the third string four frets higher. Notes on the third string can be played seven frets higher on the fourth string. In other words it is three from the first to second string-four from the second to the third string and seven from the third to the fourth string.



We are now ready to take up the Study of Positions and Barre chords. On every fret there can be made a position or bar. A Position is when the first finger of the left hand is placed on one string only and the other finger or fingers, are used at the same time on the other strings.

A Position is written with a \* or "Pos" or the letter "P."

A Barre chord or Bar more often the letter "B" is when the first finger of the left hand is laid flat across two or more strings. It is named after the fret the first finger rests on.



## To The Front

MARCH

F. J. BACON

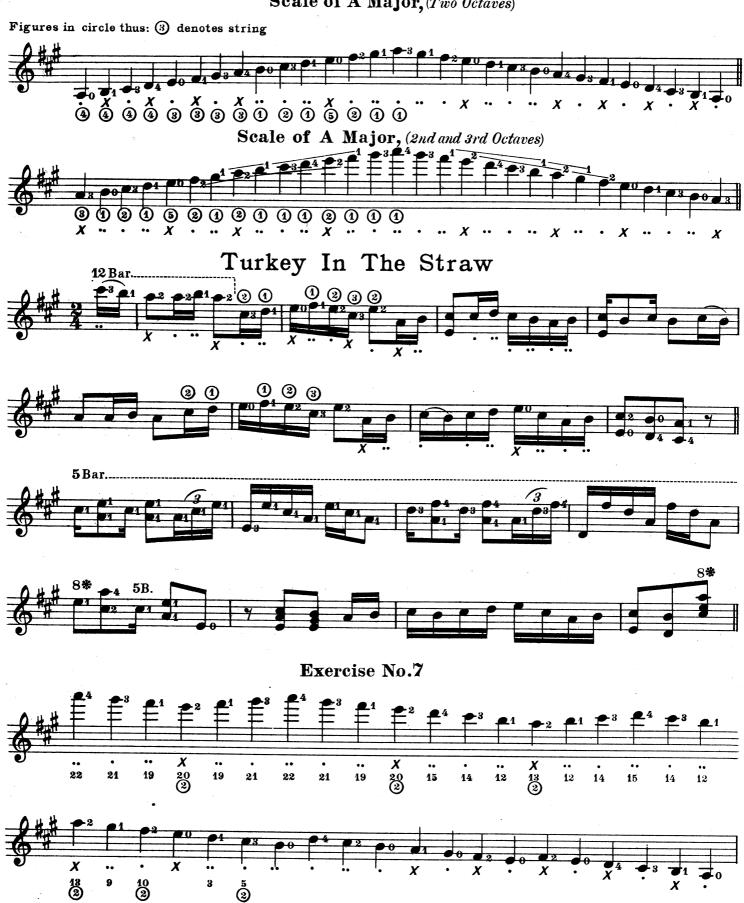


## Massa's In The Cold, Cold Ground



The student having learned where the same notes can be played on the different strings, should now master the following scale written in positions, as it enables one to play rapid passages with much more ease and smoothness.

### Scale of A Major, (Two Octaves)



## Marks of Expression etc.

p is the abbreviation for Piano and means soft and gentle.

is the abbreviation for *Pianissimo* and means extremely soft.

f is the abbreviation for Forte and means loud.

If is the abbreviation for Fortissimo and means very loud.

mf moderately loud mp moderately soft.

f with force This sign  $\rightarrow$  indicates that the notes under which it is placed are to be especially emphasized.

Allegro means with speed. Allegretto not quite as fast as Allegro. Allegro vivace to be played fast and with vivacity. Legato Smooth and connected Staccato "Snappy" and detached.

Brilliante showy Accellerando faster and faster.

Cadenza Embellishment Coda an extra passage at the end. 8va to be played an octave higher than written.

ad lib at pleasure Loco as written Veloce as fast as possible.

### The Minor Keys

Every major Key has a relative minor, which bears the same signature as the Major. When changing to a minor Key from the Major the change is in Harmony and very pleasing to the ear. The same applies when changing from a Minor to its relative Major.

The sixth note of a Major scale or Key is the key note to its relative minor

The relative Major key to any minor key is always a minor third higher than the minor key. (A minor third is an interval composed of one and one half tones)

Major means more and Minor means less. There are three kinds of Minor scales. We shall study only the "Melodic" minor scale, as it is the one in general use and more pleasing to the ear.

The major scale is composed of five tones and two half tones, the half tones coming only between the third and fourth and the seventh and eighth notes.

The Minor scale is also made up of five tones and two half tones but the latter in the minor scale come between the 2nd and 3rd and 7th and 8th of the ascending scale, and between the 5th and 6th and the 2nd and 3d of the descending scale. (See illustration) Two accidentals are always necessary for the ascending scale of the melodic minor, but they are cancelled when descending as the 6th and 7th degrees are not raised when descending.

The major key note is the first above the last sharp.

Where there are three sharps in the signature, F would be the first, C the second, and G the last. The name of the next note above G would be "A" consequently three sharps would be called the key of "A". The relative minor to "A" would be "F" because it is the sixth note of "A" Major.



### Scale of F sharp Minor





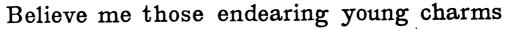


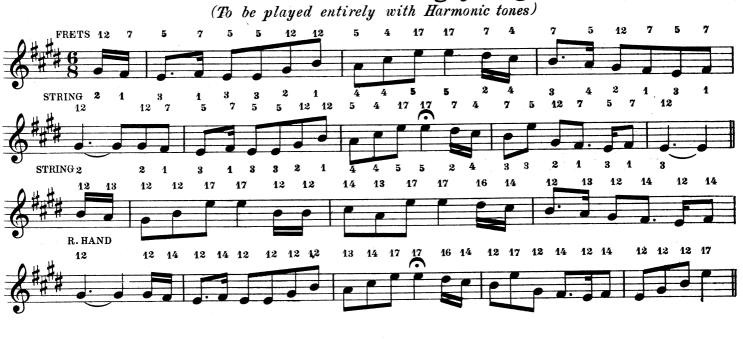
Harmonic tones (bell like tones) may be produced on the open strings of the banjo, by lightly touching the string with the ball of the third finger of the left hand, and picking the string with the right hand. Just enough pressure should be used with the left hand, to prevent the string vibrating, and it should be removed as soon as the string is picked.

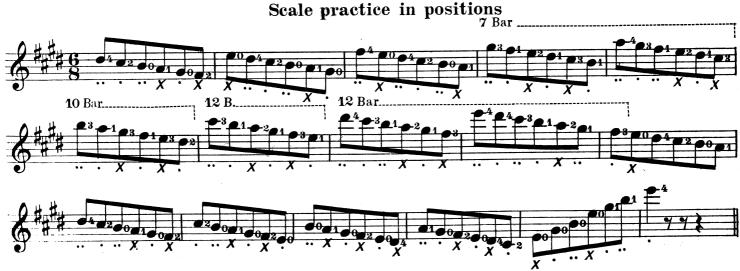
Harmonic tones can be made at the 4th 5th 7th 9th 12th 16th and 19th frets. also on the 17th on the 5th string.



Right hand or Artificial Harmonics, are made by placing the ball of the second finger of the right hand lightly on the string at the desired fret picking the string with the thumb, which is held under the hand, and removing the finger immediately after the string is picked. The ball of the second finger must always be placed 12 frets from the left hand finger.









Three notes, with a figure three written over or under them are called a *triplet*. The 3 written above indicates that the three notes are played in the time of two of the same denomination. A group of six notes with a figure 6 placed over or under them signifies that they are to be played in the time of four notes of the same denomination.

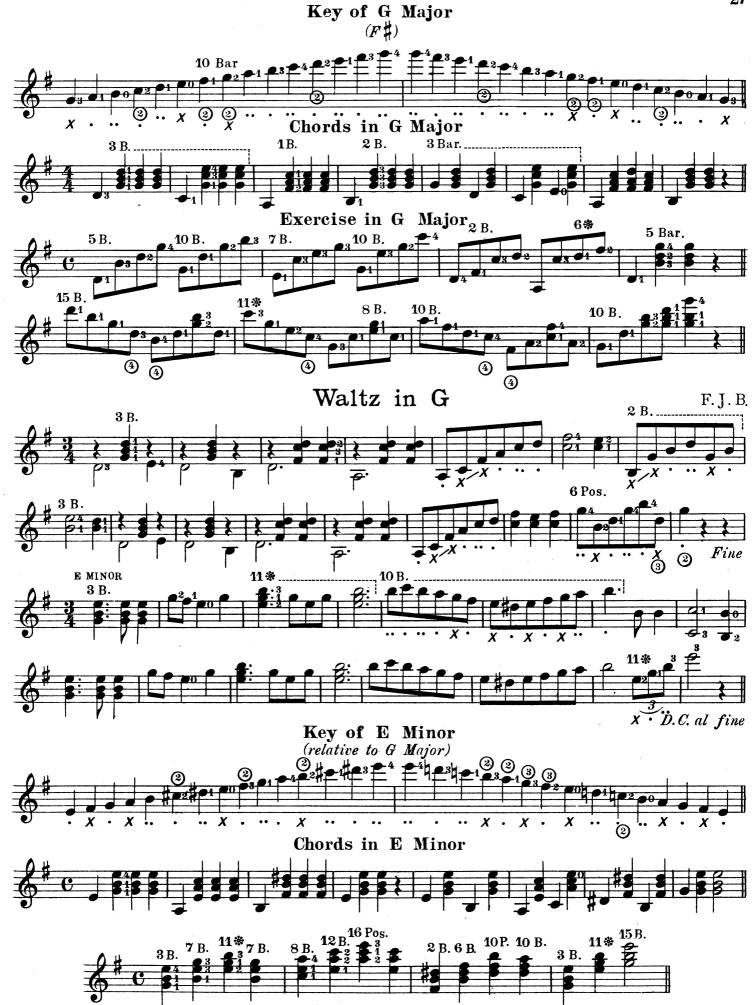
A grace note thus & is a small note and is always played very quickly. It has very little time value.

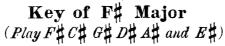




## The Key of B Major $F\sharp C\sharp G\sharp D\sharp and A\sharp$









The scales which you have thus far learned have been either major or minor, and consisted of a series of whole tones and half tones. These are called diatonic scales.

We will now take up the study of the *chromatic* scale which is a succession of *half tones* only. Sharps and double sharps are used in the *ascending* scale, and flats and naturals in the *descending* scale.



### Tarantella



There is very little music for the banjo written in Flat Keys occasionally you will find a selection in one or two flats, or a strain that modulates into a flat key.

The flat (b) placed before any note, lowers it a half step.

A double flat (bb) lowers it one whole step.

A natural and a flat together (\$\delta\$) placed beside a note, restores the note which has been double flatted to its former pitch.



## Scale of D Minor

(relative Minor of A Major) Simple Chords in D Minor Exercise in F Major and D Minor **10** Bar 1 Bar Key of B Flat (Two Flats)
(B and E Flatted) Simple Chords in B Flat 1 Bar 8B. Exercise in B Flat Key of G Minor (relative to B Flat Major) Simple Chords in G Minor 6B.10B.6B. 5B. Exercise in G Minor

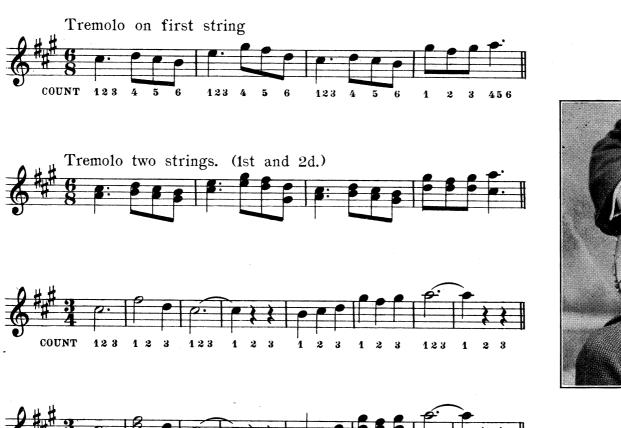
# 33 Scale of E Flat Major (B E and A Flatted) Simple Chords in E Flat 4B. 6B. 6 Bar Key of C Minor relative to Eb Major Simple Chords in C Minor 7 \* 5 B. Scale of Ab Major (B. E. A. and D. Flatted) Simple Chords in Ab Major 4B. Key of F Minor (relative to Ab Major) Chords in F Minor Key of D Major (B. E. A. B. and G Flat) Chords in D Major Key of Bb Minor (relative to Db Major) Chords in B Minor 1 Bar. 1B.

4B.

We are now ready to take up the *Tremolo*, one of the most beautiful effects obtained on the Banjo. Rest the third finger of the right hand on the head of the banjo about three to three and one half inches from the bridge. The second finger can also rest on the head of the banjo, but the fourth finger must not, as this would not allow as free a swing of the first finger, which is the one used in making the tremolo. The first finger swings rapidly back and forth, across the string or strings, causing a continuous trill.

Sustained notes are played this way, and a great many melodies can be played tremolo, and at the same time the thumb of the right hand can pick the accompaniment.

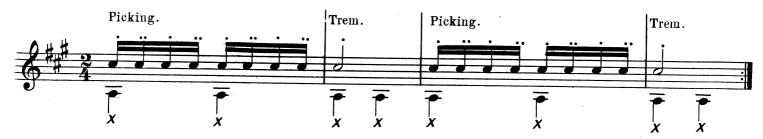
Swing the first finger from the second joint, as rapidly as possible, allowing only the tip end of the finger to touch the string. Keep the thumb down (See Illustration.) Notes that are to be played tremolo are sometimes written  $\sharp$  or abbreviated *trem*. When the thumb is to be used along with the tremolo, the notes are written with the stems down, and the notes that are to be played tremolo are written with stems up.





When playing the tremolo on the third and fourth strings the right hand can be drawn over far enough so that the first finger can swing freely back and forth on the strings. The second and third fingers can even rest lightly on the first and second strings, instead of on the head of the banjo, if you find it is easier to tremolo the third and fourth strings this way. When there is one note with the stem up, and two or more notes with stems turned down in a measure, and slurred above and below, this means that both the upper and lower notes are tremoloed together, the upper note being held throughout the measure. In order to tremolo loud on the inside strings (second third and fourth) the first finger, is slightly tipped towards the bridge and a trifle lower on the string, instead of using the tip of the finger. This takes considerable force to make the finger tremolo fast which is very necessary.





In the above exercise the first and third measures are to be picked in the usual manner, and the second and fourth measures are to be played tremolo.

It is possible to pass from the picking style to the tremolo, without making the slightest break if you will practice this carefully.



## Dance - Magnetic





In The Gloaming



## La Paloma



Exercises in Technique for both right and left hand fingers



## Dance Of The Butterflies

8va 3 9B. TREM. TREM.

TREM. TREM. 

### Forest Dale

MARCH & TWO STEP





## Paddy Whack



## On The Range





## Wildwood Memories



## March - The Conquerer

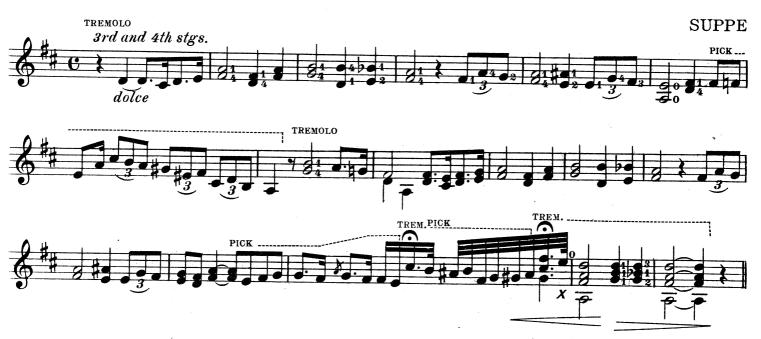
Respectfully dedicated to L. A. Franklin and A. B. Fischer

FRED J. BACON





## Selection from "Poet & Peasant" Overture



### The Fascinator





## Kinloch of Kinloch

Fantasia for Banjo







# Old Black Joe





## Famous Reels & Hornpipes



#### Transposition

The meaning of this is to transpose from one key to another If for example, you wish to transpose a composition from D major to E major, you must change the signature from two sharps to four, and play each in the piece one step higher. If you should wish to transpose from E to F you would change the signature from four sharps to one flat, and play all notes one half step higher. In the following illustration, we shall transpose "America" from the Key of D major to E major.



### Syncopation

Syncopation is the characteristic rhythm of what is popularly called "Rag-time." It is the alteration of the natural rhythm, in which the accented notes come on the unaccented part of the measure. Thus, in a measure of  $\frac{2}{4}$  time the four eighth notes of which it is composed, which in their natural rhythm would be  $\frac{1}{4}$  are written in this way:  $\frac{1}{4}$  so that the accent is displaced and falls on the last half of one beat and the first half of the next, united in one note. In this way also the eight sixteenth notes in  $\frac{2}{4}$  time can be arranged to show syncopation. Thus, the

## "The Turkey Gobbler" Rag



#### C Notation (English tuning)

In the C notation the strings produce the tones just as the notes appear when written

The strings-are tuned to the piano as follows:



# Key of G (C Natation) Played the same as the Key of E

